

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2005

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary, Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We are writing to you about New York's 42nd Infantry Division of the National Guard which is serving currently in Tikrit, Iraq. Some of us have received correspondence from soldiers from the 42nd Infantry Division, and we are extremely dismayed to learn from them that the unit currently lacks the necessary equipment, including armored vehicles and body armor, to conduct its missions in frequently hostile conditions.

As you know, the issue of adequately armored equipment for U.S. servicemen and women in Iraq has been ongoing and appears to have yet been sufficiently addressed. It is our understanding that requests for equipment were made by the 42nd Infantry Division in May 2004, when the unit was first activated, but that the unit has yet to receive the equipment that they need to keep them safe. For example, one soldier made an initial request for approximately \$3000 worth of gear, which would have included everything from utility tape to body armor for the duration of his tour in Iraq. He received roughly \$45-60 worth of gear, and that was split between two people. He was told the rest would be given as it became available. While they were issued other supplies, such as tape, the majority of the requested equipment was not issued to them.

It also is our understanding that as many as seventy to one hundred vehicles used by the unit lack adequate armor and safety features. Many trucks lack safety straps, which would make traveling in the back of a truck much safer. Some vehicles also lack locks on gun turrets. One soldier stated that he constantly struggled to maintain control of a 120-lb machine gun during the convoy between Kuwait and Iraq, simply because the gun mount did not have a locking mechanism. Also, while some of the vehicles have pieces of metal welded onto the doors and sides, the metal is severely oxidized and falling apart. In some cases, tape is being used to hold these pieces of metal together. Additionally, the metal is so heavy that soldiers are instructed not to place sand bags on the floors of the vehicles (which would offer some protection from an explosion) because the vehicle would be carrying too much weight.

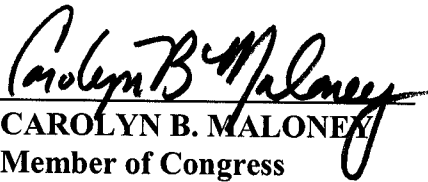
At a hearing held today by the House Committee on Armed Services, when asked by Representative Tim Ryan (D-OH) about the 42nd Infantry Division's lack of equipment, General John Abizaid stated that he would look into the matter because as of February 15, vehicles were supposed to have the necessary armor. However, as the photos provided to us by the soldiers and shown by Representative Ryan at the hearing show, there seems to be a discrepancy between your public statements, including your appearance on the February 3, 2005, edition of *Larry King Live* when you stated that as of February 15, "there will not be a vehicle moving around in Iraq

anywhere outside of a protected compound that does not have the appropriate armor," and what we are hearing from the soldiers.

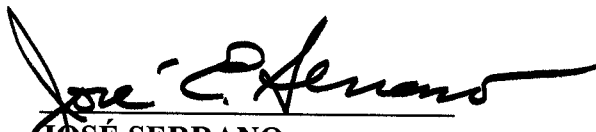
While we certainly hope that all U.S. military personnel, including National Guard and Reserve units, will have this protective armor this month, we respectfully request your assistance specifically on behalf of the 42nd Infantry Division, based out of Fort Drum, to ensure that this unit receives the equipment it needs.

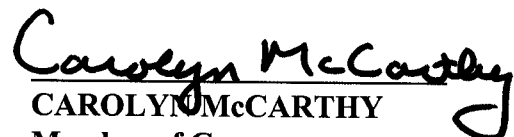
Thank you for your prompt attention in redressing this matter.

Sincerely,

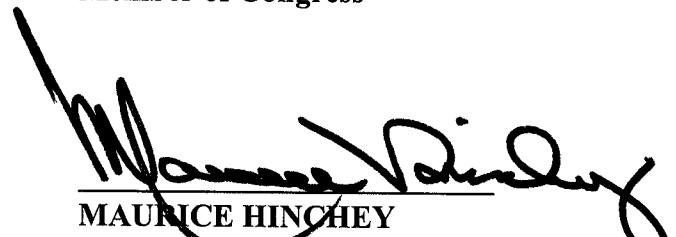

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

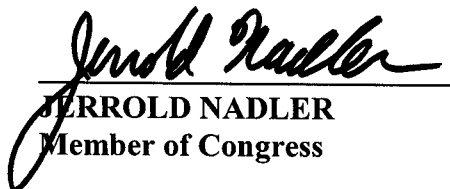

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